

**Alaska State Library
Historical Collections**

Guide to Collection

Girardot, Robert

Robert Girardot Photograph Collection, 1964

PCA 572

1 folder
22 b&w photographs

Processed by: Sara Bornstein, Mar. 2014

ACQUISITION: This collection was donated by Dennis Girardot, Robert Girardot's son. *Acc.#2014-015*

ACCESS: The collection is unrestricted.

COPYRIGHT: Request for permission to publish or reproduce material from the collection should be discussed with the Librarian.

PROCESSING: This collection has been described at the item level. The original order was maintained. The photographs were placed in Mylar, and all items placed into a pH-neutral folder.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

"My father, Robert W. Girardot was a base photographer on Elmendorf AFB at the time of the 64 earthquake. We were stationed at Elmendorf from 1959 to late 1964. My family was living in a second floor apartment on Elmendorf AFB in Anchorage. It was Good Friday so my brother, 13 at the time, was out of school. I was five years old. My father had brought us up the Alcan Highway four years earlier. My father was the Elmendorf Base photographer. This earthquake is the first memory I have in life. I remember it being day time, not sure what hour. Our apartment building began to shake and roll violently. I have vague memories of my father grabbing us and putting us in the door frame that went between the apartment hallway and the living room. It was a very small apartment. As I sat there looking out of the living room picture window I recall the apartment rolling like a boat. It would roll towards the ground and that was what we would see, then it would roll back and we would only see sky. I don't really recall being frightened, but rather just amazed by the spectacle. Furniture in the living room was moving about. A bird cage with our pet parakeet crashed to the floor and killed our pet. The closet door fell open and gifts for my brother's upcoming birthday party flew out. My mother was in the kitchen and was tending to two things; a large pot of my father's precious chili, and she was icing a birthday cake that was configured in the shape of a guitar since my brother was a Beatle wannabe and eventually became a professional musician. Somehow the physics of the shake and roll lifted that pot of chili and spread it across the kitchen, including the cake. My mother made an attempt to flee the kitchen but was pummeled by flying dishes, pots and pans. She did make it into the apartment stairwell and suffered a few bruises and cuts.

Afterwards there was shock, and an eery quiet. Power was off of course. We could see smoke coming from several areas on the horizon. My parents sent us outside where we witnessed huge cracks in the ground, and in the buildings. That night we slept in the apartment using candles. There was no heat. The aftershocks were constant and some quite violent. The next day my father was ordered to tour the base and community of Anchorage and take photos of the damage. We have a trunk full of earthquake photos and have donated a few to the State Museum. The next two nights we slept in our 64 two door Chevy, with only blankets and flash lights. Our neighbors did the same. The aftershocks were so violent that the authorities thought the buildings might collapse. It was quite fortuitous that school was out for Good Friday because my brother's school was destroyed. If class had been in session there may have been many injured children."

Dennis Girardot

SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

Photos of 1964 earthquake in Anchorage taken by Robert Girardot, Air Force photographer stationed on Elmendorf AFB.

INVENTORY

- 1 [Waterfront aerial view of harbor, train tracks, and city.]
- 2 [Destroyed business district street. Man with musical instruments in foreground.]
- 3 [Damaged building with sign, Flowers by Bagoy.]
- 4 [Man carrying suitcases between car & group of suitcases sitting on damaged business-district street.]
- 5 [Person in military uniform stands in front of smashed car on damaged business-district street.]
- 6 [Damaged and Sunken business along snow lined street.]
- 7 [Aerial view of large, flat-roofed buildings.]
- 8 [Aerial view of damaged building and surrounding area.]
- 9 [Sunken hillside and cracks beside road.]
- 10 [Damaged buildings fall down cracked hillside.]
- 11 [Damaged railroad tracks and cars.]
- 12 [Large crack in earth runs under house.]
- 13 [Damaged car in railroad yard.]
- 14 [Building reduced to rubble.]
- 15 [Damaged street, lamp post, and building.]
- 16 [People viewing damaged buildings.]

- 17 [Damaged building next door to Singer Sewing Center and Craig's.]
- 18 [People walk between damaged houses and apartment buildings.]
- 19 [Damaged office with furniture and papers all over.]
- 20 [House tilted downhill.]
- 21 [Jim Beam bottles broken in storeroom.]
- 22 [Chugach Theater.]